

The impact of structural conditions in communes on sports behaviour of adolescents and young adults in Switzerland

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Young peoples' sport activity in Switzerland differs considerably depending on the linguistic region (Lamprecht, Fischer, & Stamm, 2008). This appears to be based on cultural as well as on structural differences. The question then arises how differing structural conditions in communes (e.g. sport facilities, significance of the municipal promotion of sport) across different linguistic regions of Switzerland cause variation in sport behaviour.

Based on the theory of social action (Coleman, 1990), it is assumed that individual behaviour is not only determined by individual but also by structural and socio-cultural factors in which a person is socially embedded. In two case studies, multilevel data was gathered analysing possible influences of structural factors on sports behaviour. Using an online survey, 15 to 25 year old inhabitants ($N = 205$) living in a German and French speaking commune were questioned about their sports participation in and outside of their commune, as well as their perception of sport-related structural characteristics in their commune. To collect information about communes' sport facilities, the sport providers ($N = 23$) were interviewed. Sport-related characteristics of the communes were also collected through two interviews with representatives of the municipal administration.

As expected, sport participation is significantly lower in the French speaking commune ($\chi^2(1, N = 205) = 3.84, p < .05$). Adolescents and young adults living in the French speaking commune are less satisfied with the sport infrastructure ($F(1,135) = 9.65, p < .01$) and evaluate the opportunities to be physically active in their commune significantly worse ($F(1,144) = 15.33, p < .01$) than their German-speaking counterparts. These first findings show the impact of structural conditions in communes on sport participation of adolescents and young people. However, it must be noted that this study is explorative and further communes would need to be examined in order to generalize the results.

References

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